

ARIZONA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SOLICITS PUBLIC INPUT ON PROPOSAL TO INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In April 2007, the Arizona State Board of Education adopted several priorities to guide its policy work, recognizing the interrelatedness of each priority. Responding to state and national calls for education systems to assess curricula rigor and student expectations, the Board chose to initiate discussion on increasing high school graduation requirements. As noted in numerous articles, beginning in the 1970s and more noticeably in the 1990s, a shift occurred in the American economy. Good jobs – those that allowed a family to participate as middle class citizens – required education and training beyond high school. Today, nearly every job that ensures some economic security requires higher levels of education. Studies undertaken specific to Arizona, a state with one of the fastest growing populations including students in the K-12 system, indicate that 98.4 percent of the fastest growing occupations paying a livable wage will require some education beyond high school. This projection, coupled with national studies that indicate over 80 percent of 8th grade students aspire to attend college, with a much lower percentage actually enrolling and successfully completing, has compelled the State Board of Education, as well as local district governing boards, to revisit how we may best prepare graduates for the real world of work and college. Equally important to economic and quality of life considerations is the centuries old understanding of the public education system's role of preparing an educated citizenry for full participation in a democratic society.

In June 2007, the Board held a special session focusing on Arizona's minimum high school graduation requirements (A.A.C. R7-2-302.) As part of its discussion, the Board considered recommendations of the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction and the findings of Arizona-focused, as well as national studies along with other states' efforts to align K-12 curricula and expectations to ensure graduates leave high school work- and/or college- ready for the 21st century. The Board also developed a process to ensure the input of key stakeholders, including other governmental entities, legislators, K-12 district officials, teachers, parents, students and the general public in the modification of existing minimum high school graduation requirement.

On August 10, 2007, the Board held a second special session on this issue and reached consensus on a proposal to increase graduation requirements. As drafted, the proposal is intended to balance statewide expectations with flexibility for local districts. It also recognizes the importance of creating multiple pathways for students to meet the proposed requirements. The Board's intent is to formally review and adopt modifications to the rule by December 30, 2007.

The State Board of Education through a series of outreach efforts is soliciting public input on proposed modifications as outlined below and also attached. The comments received will help guide the Board's final decision. Therefore, the Board is seeking input regarding those aspects of the proposal that are supported, as well as areas of concern. Information and opportunity for input is available through the State Board of Education's website at: <http://www.ade.az.gov/stateboard/>.

Written comments may be mailed to:

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1535 W. Jefferson Avenue
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Or by emailing: HighSchoolGraduation@azed.gov

Current Arizona Minimum High School Graduation Requirements (A.A.C. R7-2-302)

The Board establishes 20 credits as the minimum number of credits necessary for high school graduation to include:

1. Four credits of English or English as a Second Language, which shall include but not be limited to the following: grammar, writing, and reading skills, advanced grammar, composition, research methods and skills and literature. One-half credit of the English requirement shall include the principles of speech and debate but not be limited to those principles.
2. One and one-half credits in the instruction in the essentials, sources and history of the constitutions of the United States and Arizona and instruction in American institutions and ideals and in the history of Arizona.
3. One credit of world history/geography
4. Two credits of mathematics taken consecutively beginning with the 9th grade, and the course content shall include Number Sense; Data Analysis and Probability; Patterns, Algebra and Functions; Geometry; Measurement and Discrete Mathematics; and Mathematical Structure/Logic
5. Two credits of science
6. One credit of fine arts or vocational education
7. Eight and one-half credits of additional courses prescribed by the local governing board subject to the approval of the State Board

Summary of Proposed Rule Modification

1. Beginning with the Graduating Class of 2012, minimum high school graduation requirements will be modified as follows:
 - Math credits will increase from 2 credits to 3 credits
 - Social Studies will increase from 2.5 credits to 3 credits, consisting of one credit of American History, one credit of World History, one-half credit of government and one-half credit of economics. Economics may be taught in departments other than social studies as determined by local district governing boards
 - Elective credits will decrease from 8.5 credits to 7 credits
2. Beginning with the Graduating Class of 2013, minimum high school graduation requirements will be as follows:
 - Math credits will increase from 3 credits to 4 credits, to include Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II or other courses that include Algebra I as a prerequisite. Additional courses in math may include courses in other subjects designated by the State Board of Education as having substantial mathematics content, such as career/technical education, the arts or economics. Using a State Board of Education approved process, students who meet specific requirements may pursue a Personal Curriculum pathway to fulfill math requirements under conditions set forth in Exhibit A.
 - Science credits will increase from 2 credits to 3 credits. Science credit requirements may be met through other subjects designated by the State Board of Education as having substantial science content, such as career/technical education.
 - Total number of required credits will increase from 20 credits to 22 credits
3. Beginning with the Graduating Class of 2013, students may choose to pursue an alternative high school graduation requirements aligned to Arizona public universities' admission standards as follows:
 - Four credits of English as defined under current rule
 - Four credits of Math to include Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and a 4th math course with an Algebra II or higher prerequisite.
 - Three credits of Science, including one credit from three of the following areas: biology, chemistry, physics, or earth science
 - Three credits of social studies as defined in point 1 above
 - One credit of Fine Arts
 - Electives of 7 credits, of which 2 credits must be earned in world languages
 - Total number of required credits will increase from 20 credits to 22 credits

Arizona High School Graduation Requirements
Proposed Modifications
(8/10/07)

<i>Graduating Class 2012</i>		<i>Graduating Class 2013</i>	
<u>State Diploma</u> English 4 credits Math 3 credits Science 2 credits Social Studies⁽¹⁾ 3 credits CTE/Fine Art 1 credit Electives 7 credits Total 20 credits	⁽¹⁾ Social Studies shall consist of one credit of American History, one credit of World History, one-half credit of government and one-half credit of economics. However, economics may be taught in departments other than social studies as determined by local district governing boards.	<u>State Diploma</u> English 4 credits Math⁽¹⁾ 4 credits Science⁽²⁾ 3 credits Social Studies 3 credits CTE/Fine Art 1 credit Electives 7 credits Total 22 credits	⁽¹⁾ To receive the diploma, a student's math course of study must include those courses through Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II or other courses that include Algebra I as a prerequisite. Additional courses in math may include courses in other subjects designated by the State Board of Education as having substantial mathematics content, such as Career and Technical Education, Economics and Arts courses. Using a State Board of Education approved process, students who meet specific requirements may pursue a Personal Curriculum pathway to fulfill math requirements as set forth in Exhibit A. ⁽²⁾ Science credit requirement may be met through other subjects designated by the State Board of Education as having substantial science content, such as career/technical education.
		<u>Regents Diploma⁽¹⁾</u> English 4 credits Math⁽²⁾ 4 credits Science⁽³⁾ 3 credits Social Studies 3 credits Fine Art 1 credit Electives⁽⁴⁾ 7 credits Total 22 credits	⁽¹⁾ The Regents Diploma is an alternative pathway that reflects Arizona Board of Regents' admissions policy requirements ⁽²⁾ Must include those courses through Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and a 4 th math course with an Algebra II pre-requisite ⁽³⁾ Must include one credit from three of the following areas: Chemistry, Physics, Biology or Earth Science ⁽⁴⁾ Must include 2 credits of World Languages

EXHIBIT A

PERSONAL CURRICULUM (PC) MODIFICATION

The use of a Personal Curriculum (PC) Modification is allowed for only two reasons:

- A student wishes to modify the mathematics requirement
- A student with a disability needs to modify the credit requirements based on his or her disability

DEFINITION OF PERSONAL CURRICULUM

The PC is a documented process that can be used to modify certain portions of Arizona's High School Graduation Requirements.

The PC, requested by the parent, legal guardian, or emancipated student, allows the governing board of a school district or charter school to award a student a high school diploma provided all elements of the PC are met. This must include as many of the content expectations of the standard Arizona High School Graduation Requirements as practicable.

A PC allows a student who is challenged with Algebra II to adjust his or her remaining mathematics credits. The PC may also be an option for students with disabilities requiring specific modifications to Arizona's High School Graduation Requirements to ensure progress with career pathway and post-secondary goals.

The PC is not a stand-alone document that drives a student's high school experience, but must be developed and coordinated with any other plans a student has in place, such as an Individualized Educational Program (IEP). At a minimum this means that modifications to the student's academic expectations made through the PC option should not erect barriers to progress along their career pathway or the achievement of post-secondary goals. The IEP is to support the student's progress in the general curriculum.

ELIGIBILITY FOR USE OF PC MODIFICATIONS

A PC may be appropriate for a student who has demonstrated one or more of the following:

- Lack of progress towards meeting Arizona's High School Graduation Requirements despite documented interventions, supports, and accommodations for a student with a disability
- Desire to complete math requirements through CTE or other programs

The PC is not a process for tracking large groups of students into an alternative curriculum.

ALLOWABLE MATHEMATICS MODIFICATIONS

A student can use the PC to reduce the course requirements for mathematics to three credits provided the student takes mathematics in the senior year. A PC can modify the Algebra II credit requirements if the student has successfully completed at least two of the required mathematics credits (Algebra I and Geometry or its equivalent).

Additional courses in mathematics can include courses in other subjects designated by the State Board of Education as having substantial mathematics content, such as Career and Technical Education, Economics, and Arts courses.

ALLOWABLE MODIFICATIONS FOR A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

The parent of a student with a disability may request a modification to Arizona's High School Graduation Requirements that is not otherwise allowable if the student has a disability as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. This allows for additional credit substitution or content modification if the changes are based on the student's disability.

KEY POINTS FOR THE PC FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

IDEA 2004 guarantees a free appropriate public education but does not establish an entitlement to a diploma. Every effort must be made to provide students with disabilities full access to the standard Arizona High School Graduation Requirements before making modifications. Modifications to state standards may affect a student's opportunity to achieve a diploma. For a student eligible for special education services, the PC modifications must:

- Incorporate as much of the subject area content expectation as practicable for the student
- Be consistent with the student's IEP

- Modify components of the content expectations within each credit requirement

PERSONAL CURRICULUM MODIFICATION PROCESS

The PC modification process demands the involvement of many people and should be used only after other options, like the use of electives, have been exhausted. Elements / requirements of the PC modification process include:

- **Initiation:** Initiated by the parent/legal guardian or emancipated student, or by the student with permission of parent/legal guardian
- **Development Team:** The development of a PC modification must include the parent / legal guardian, student, counselor or principal designee, and the school district superintendent or charter school executive or designee. The development of a PC modification for a student with a disability shall be completed by the student's IEP team.
- **Agreement:** Written agreement between the school district or public school superintendent or chief executive, parent/legal guardian, and student
- **Credits and Content:** Must meet as many of the standard Arizona High School Graduation Requirements as practicable. The PC shall include measurable high school goals and a method of evaluation to determine whether goals are met.
- **Use of IEP:** Special education students' IEPs shall identify courses (which may be contained in the PC), supports, accommodations and modifications.

As the Development Team formulates the PC the members should ensure that the proposed modifications:

- Reasonably enable the achievement of post-secondary goals
- Facilitate progress along the student's career pathway and the achievement of post-secondary goals
- Enhance the relevance of the student's educational experience
- Provide full access to statewide assessments
- Provide a gateway to employment and productive adult living

- Maintain the integrity of the diploma

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall monitor a school district if there is reason to believe that the school district is allowing modifications inconsistent with the requirements set forth by the State Board of Education.

LIMITATIONS ON PC MODIFICATIONS:

There are no modifications to credit requirements allowed in the following areas, except for students with disabilities:

- English
- Science
- Civics/Government/American History, World History, and Economics

Additionally, a student may wish to specialize in a curriculum area like music or career and technical education. The PC modification is not necessarily the way to accomplish this. For example, a personal curriculum is not needed if:

- A student wants to pursue career and technical education courses, humanities courses, industrial education or applied arts
- A student wants to take accelerated courses through dual enrollment, advanced placement or International Baccalaureate
- A student wants to enroll in alternative education programs

Students participating in these programs are expected to meet the standard Arizona High School Graduation Requirements and can do so through the use of electives, testing out, CTE programs and other processes which are already in use in the high school. The school district or charter school may deny a PC modification if other options for meeting the student's educational needs have not been documented, if it is not in the best interest of the student, or if the members of the PC development team cannot reach agreement.

POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS OF USING A PC

Parents and students need to understand the possible consequences for modifications of the Arizona's High School Graduation Requirements or high school content expectations. Personal curriculum modifications for students with disabilities that reduce the number of content expectations mastered by the student, may affect the student's readiness to:

- Be admitted to college

- Be eligible for college scholarships
- Enter a trade school
- Secure a job in the career of their choice
- Be eligible for NCAA athletic programs